

February 25, 2019

Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan
Seattle City Attorney Pete Holmes
Seattle City Council
Seattle Municipal Court Judge Ed McKenna
Seattle Police Department Chief Carmen Best

Dear Government Officials:

Attached please find a document titled: "System Failure – Report on Prolific Offenders in Seattle's Criminal Justice System." This report was commissioned by multiple Seattle neighborhood districts – representing Pioneer Square, Chinatown/International District, SODO, Downtown, Ballard, the University District and Seattle's tourism industry. It analyzes a sample of 100 individuals with a high frequency of criminal activity in Seattle focused on understanding their impact on public safety in Seattle's busiest neighborhoods, the root causes of their problem behaviors, and why Seattle's criminal justice system fails to reduce their recidivism.

For several years, our organizations have raised concerns about growing public safety challenges on the streets of our neighborhoods. We have seen many earnest efforts by Seattle police officers to address these challenges, but the situation has only become worse. In October 2018, we convened a public safety forum with 200 business and community leaders from across Seattle. They told Council members, the Deputy Mayor, and Seattle police leaders about the hazards they face every day – assaults on employees and customers, open-air drug activity at their front door, and erratic behaviors fueled by substance use disorders. Our local police officers are well aware of these problems but tell us that there's not much more they can do.

Following that meeting, we endeavored to better understand why the same people are able to commit the same crimes in our neighborhoods day after day. The report provides meaningful insights into what's happening – Seattle's criminal justice system lacks basic accountability for the individuals that repeatedly commit crimes and for the leaders responsible for keeping our city safe.

A relatively small number of people with a huge impact on our neighborhoods are cycling through the criminal justice system without any meaningful prospect of changing their behavior. The answer, we believe, is wholesale reform of our city's criminal justice system led by you, our elected and appointed leaders.

We understand that this is a complex issue. By no means do we consider ourselves experts in criminal justice reform. However, as leaders of our respective neighborhoods, we are acutely familiar with the results of this system failure. We expect our municipal leadership to begin working on a long-term solution and take immediate action to reduce the impact these prolific offenders have upon our neighborhoods.

It is clear to us that the justice system is not meeting its obligation to protect public safety in our communities. We fully support a policy that includes alternatives to incarceration and access to behavioral health treatment, but for that system to work there must be accountability for outcomes within the justice system and for the people who continue to repeatedly cause harm in our communities. This report clearly indicates that accountability is missing.

This issue is of paramount importance to our organizations and the tens of thousands of businesses, residents and visitors that we collectively represent. As such, we are committed to working together collaboratively with you in the days and weeks ahead.

Respectfully,

Barry Blanton
Board Chair
Chinatown International District BIA

Mark Crawford
Interim Executive Director
University District Partnership

Erin Goodman
Executive Director
SODO BIA

Lisa Howard
Executive Director
Alliance for Pioneer Square

Tom Norwalk
President & CEO
Visit Seattle/Seattle Tourism
Improvement Area

Jon Scholes
President & CEO
Downtown Seattle Association

Mike Stewart
Executive Director
Ballard Alliance

Cc:

King County Executive Dow Constantine
King County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg